

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-23 (canceled)

1 **Claim 24 (new):** A picture coding method including
2 the steps of:

3 inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary
4 frame rate that is not known in advance;

5 determining the input frame rate of the inputted
6 moving picture data;

7 providing a target value for a buffer storage
8 amount;

9 determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded
10 picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by
11 the apparatus;

12 calculating a correction amount based on a
13 difference of said target value and said buffer remaining
14 amount; and

15 calculating a target code amount for use in said
16 coding step by adding said correction amount to said
17 reference target code amount, wherein said target code
18 amount is based on said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 25 (new):** The method of claim 24, wherein
2 said target value is based on said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 26 (new):** The method of claim 25, wherein
2 said target code amount is also based upon a frame-
3 skipping threshold value corresponding to a threshold
4 value used to judge whether a next picture of the
5 inputted moving picture data is coded.

1 **Claim 27 (new):** The method of claim 24 further
2 comprising the steps of:

3 providing a reference coding frame rate based upon
4 said input frame rate; and

5 calculating a reference target code amount using
6 said reference coding frame rate, wherein said target
7 code amount is determined based upon the reference target
8 code amount.

1 **Claim 28 (new):** The method of claim 27, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 a maximum value of said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 29 (new):** The method of claim 27, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 an average value of said measured frame rates within a
4 time interval.

1 **Claim 30 (new):** The method of claim 29, further
2 comprising the step of updating said reference coding
3 frame rate, wherein, when the reference coding frame rate
4 before being updated is larger than the reference coding
5 frame rate after being updated, a value between said
6 reference coding frame rate before being updated and said
7 reference coding frame rate after being updated is used
8 as an updated reference coding frame rate.

1 **Claim 31 (new):** A picture coding method including
2 the steps of:
3 inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary
4 frame rate that is not known in advance;
5 determining the input frame rate of the inputted
6 moving picture data;
7 providing a reference coding frame rate;
8 determining a reference target code amount using
9 said reference coding frame rate;
10 providing a target value for a buffer storage
11 amount;

12 determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded
13 picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by
14 the apparatus;

15 calculating a correction amount based on a
16 difference of said predetermined target value and said
17 buffer remaining amount; and

18 calculating a target code amount for use in said
19 coding step by adding said correction amount to said
20 reference target code amount.

1 **Claim 32 (new):** The method of claim 31, wherein
2 said target code amount is also calculated based upon a
3 frame-skipping threshold value corresponding to a
4 threshold value used to judge whether a next picture of
5 the inputted moving picture data is coded.

1 **Claim 33 (new):** The method of claim 31, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 a maximum value of said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 34 (new):** The method of claim 31, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 an average value of said measured frame rates within a
4 time interval.

1 **Claim 35 (new):** The method of claim 34, further
2 comprising the step of updating said reference coding
3 frame rate, wherein, when the reference coding frame rate
4 before being updated is larger than the reference coding
5 frame rate after being updated, a value between said
6 reference coding frame rate before being updated and said
7 reference coding frame rate after being updated is used
8 as an updated reference coding frame rate.

1 **Claim 36 (new):** A picture coding method including
2 the steps of:

3 inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary
4 frame rate;

5 coding said moving picture data into coded picture
6 data for storage in a buffer prior to outputting said
7 coded picture data;

8 determining the input frame rate of the inputted
9 moving picture data;

10 determining a reference coding frame rate using said
11 input frame rate;

12 calculating a reference target code amount using
13 said reference coding frame rate;

14 determining a target value for a buffer storage
15 amount using said reference coding frame rate;

16 determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded
17 picture data stored in the buffer and not yet outputted
18 by the apparatus;

19 calculating a correction amount based on a
20 difference of said predetermined target value and said
21 buffer remaining amount; and

22 calculating a target code amount for use in said
23 coding step by adding said correction amount to said
24 reference target code amount, wherein

25 the code amount of the outputted coded picture data
26 is approximated to said target code amount in said coding
27 step.

1 **Claim 37 (new):** The method of claim 36, wherein
2 said target code amount is also calculated based upon a
3 frame-skipping threshold value corresponding to a
4 threshold value used to judge whether a next picture of
5 the inputted moving picture data is coded.

1 **Claim 38 (new):** The method of claim 36, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 a maximum value of said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 39 (new):** The method of claim 36, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 an average value of said measured frame rates within a
4 time interval.

1 **Claim 40 (new):** The method of claim 39, further
2 comprising the step of updating said reference coding
3 frame rate, wherein, when the reference coding frame rate
4 before being updated is larger than the reference coding
5 frame rate after being updated, a value between said
6 reference coding frame rate before being updated and said
7 reference coding frame rate after being updated is used
8 as an updated reference coding frame rate.

1 **Claim 41 (new):** A picture coding method including
2 the steps of:
3 determining a reference coding frame rate using the
4 input frame rate of inputted moving picture data;
5 calculating a reference target code amount using
6 said reference coding frame rate;
7 determining a target value for a buffer storage
8 amount using said reference coding frame rate;
9 determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded
10 picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by
11 the apparatus;

12 calculating a correction amount based on a
13 difference of said predetermined target value and said
14 buffer remaining amount; and
15 calculating a target code amount for use in said
16 coding step by adding said correction amount to said
17 reference target code amount.

1 **Claim 42 (new):** The method of claim 41, wherein
2 said target code amount is also calculated based upon a
3 frame-skipping threshold value corresponding to a
4 threshold value used to judge whether a next picture of
5 the inputted moving picture data is coded.

1 **Claim 43 (new):** The method of claim 41, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 a maximum value of said input frame rate.

1 **Claim 44 (new):** The method of claim 41, wherein
2 said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon
3 an average value of said measured frame rates within a
4 time interval.

1 **Claim 45 (new):** The method of claim 44, further
2 comprising the step of updating said reference coding
3 frame rate, wherein, when the reference coding frame rate

4 before being updated is larger than the reference coding
5 frame rate after being updated, a value between said
6 reference coding frame rate before being updated and said
7 reference coding frame rate after being updated is used
8 as the updated reference coding frame rate.